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General Pulaski's Age

[Baptism Record Verifies Historian's Hunch](#)

by Edward Pinkowski

Polish American Journal, February 1996

Veteran historian Edward Pinkowski has dedicated much of his career research on [General Casimir Pulaski](#). His ability to discover mistakes of Pulaski historians are discussed in this article. "Never before were so many errors made against one man as in the case of Pulaski," Pinkowski said. "He was a victim of corruption, lies, forgeries, trumped up charges, revisions of history and defamation of character."

Just recently, in another major discovery, Pinkowski revealed that Pulaski died on the Wasp, a privately owned square rigger, while standing still in the river at Thunderbolt, Georgia, on the 15th instead of the 11th of October in 1779, and was buried in the ground at nearby Greenwich plantation. Pinkowski has followed a paper trail that indicates Pulaski's body was exhumed in 1853 and placed in a metal container next to the cornerstone under the Pulaski Monument in Savannah, Georgia.

General Pulaski's Age

Little did the staff of the Polish American Journal realize early in 1995--when it decided to print a page written in Latin from the baptismal records of Holy Cross Church in Warsaw, Poland--that it would uncover a mistake generations of Poles have lived by, and test the moral fiber of the present one whether it will go by the real year of General Pulaski's birth or a phony one. Only a short time remains to mark the real 250th anniversary!

Accidentally, the PAJ didn't tell the full story of Pulaski's birth on March 4, 1745. It cut off the column on the left side of the document which noted the date of the baptismal ceremony. Had not John Szuch of Seville, Ohio, who has spent most of his life collecting Pulaski memorabilia, sent me a Xerox copy--as he did several months earlier to the PAJ Editor Mark Kohan--I would not have had a full page of the church document to work with, and to compare it with a deceiving entry in the baptismal records of St. Nicholas Church in Warka, 36 miles south of Warsaw.

TWO BAPTISMS AT ONCE. Though it was smudged with ink, the date in the left hand column for Casimir Pulaski was the same as it was on the right side for his older brother, Francis, who was born more than a year earlier. Surprisingly, it is clear from the Latin text that the two sons of Jozef and Marianne Pulaski were not baptized in Warsaw's Holy Cross Church, as many historians have written in the past 50 years, or in the grand palace of Prince Adam Czartoryski (which was not recognized by Rome as a place to baptize a child), but in the place where baptisms are legitimately held in the parish church at Grabow, approximately 3.5 miles from Warka. Furthermore, the document shows that Christopher Foltz, S.C.M., (Congregation of Missions) rode from Warsaw alone or in one of the gilded carriages of a Polish nobleman, and performed the baptismal ceremonies on Sunday, March 14, 1745.

For the first time in two and a half centuries, the two entries made in Latin in the Holy Cross baptismal records in Warsaw completely destroy the manufactured date that General Pulaski was born in 1747.

The day he was born was a Thursday and his parents were unable--owing to snow and ice on the roads and shortness of time--to arrange ceremonies for the following Sunday. Nevertheless, the cream of the Polish nobility and ruling party--known as the Family--led by Michael and August Czartoryski and their brother-in-law Stanislaus Poniatowski (whose son became the last king of Poland), and their wives traveled great distances to attend the baptismal ceremonies a week later in the parish church on the Pilica River. The godparents, or

patrini as they were called in Latin, were drawn from this circle as well as close relatives of the Zielinski family.

GODPARENTS. The godparents of Casimir Michael Wladislaus Victor--to list his choice of first names--were Stanislaus Poniatowski, voivode of Masovia; Princess Maria Zofia Czartoryska, wife of Prince August Alexander Czartoryski (a voivode in Russia); Casimir Rudzinski, castellan of Czersk; and Princess Eleanora Czartoryska, wife of Prince Michael Czartoryski, deputy chancellor of Lithuania. Their spouses were the godparents for Francis Peter August Stanislaus Pulaski.

The person who practically set March 4, 1747, in stone was Dr. Wladyslaw Konopczynski, who made the goof in a lengthy biography of Pulaski in 1931. Nearly everyone who came after him used the same date. In 1947, however, he wrote an article, Chrzcziny u Panstwa Pulaskich, for Tygodnik Powszechny in Krakow, in which he changed the year of Pulaski's birth from 1747 to 1746.

PULASKI MUSEUM. After World War II, when conditions vastly changed in Poland, a tourist organization in Warsaw known as Towarzystwo Laczności z Polonia Zagraniczna, wanted to open a museum in memory of General Casimir Pulaski in Warka and encourage Americans to visit the birthplace of the Polish hero who sacrificed his life for their freedom. The pastor of the Roman Catholic Church there, St. Nicholas the Great Pope, was asked to provide a copy of Casimir Pulaski's birth certificate. He delivered one on Nov. 20, 1948. The baptismal register of the church in which he found the entry covered the period from October 7, 1738, to the year 1747. Evidently, it was kept at the time by the church curate.

The translation of the Latin text, with the name of the curate given instead of the words "same as above," discloses that it could easily dupe a layman or a college professor to make up a year to fit his imagination. The year 1747, however, was not in the period of the book in which these words appeared: "I, G. Zembrycki, through the authority of Theodore Binner of the St. Franciscan order in Grabow, baptized (no date given) an infant of the name Casimir Michael Wencelaus Victor, born March 4 to the noted de Zielinski, in the grand palace of Prince Adam Czartoryski."

Somewhere along the line, the record the Vincentian missionary left in a Warsaw church displaced the yearless birth certificate from St. Nicholas Church as the showpiece of the Pulaski Museum in Warka. The museum director, Wojciech Pietrzak, sent a Xerox copy of the original page from the Warsaw church to John Szuch in Ohio, and he in turn shared his good fortune with others in the coming months.

What is most disturbing of all is that millions of Americans still don't know that General Pulaski was born March 4, 1745. Who will tell them? And who will hold special events in the few months left of his 250th year

[Pulaski Laid Here](#)

Polish American Journal, November 1996
by Ed Pinkowski

Pulaski's body is found again.

In the jargon of a newspaper headline, Edward Pinkowski, an 80-year-old historical writer, said September 27 that experts working on the \$365,000 restoration of the General Pulaski Monument in Savannah, Georgia, slipped a rusted metal box containing 80 percent of the Polish general's skeleton out of the foundation and carried it away gingerly for more study.

With only a few members of Dr. James C. Metts' Pulaski exhumation team present, Dr. Karen Burns, a forensic anthropologist at the University of Georgia in Athens, and James Wermuth, an archaeologist from Newport, Rhode Island, stepped over loose stones to catch a glimpse of the rusted box. Dr. Don Gardner, head of Savannah's Park & Tree Department, helped them lift it out of the monument's base.

Holding a rectangular 18- by 12-inch box in a tin cookie pan on his lap, Wermuth rode in a Savannah police car, escorted by a police officer on a black horse, to the headquarters of the Savannah Historical Society, just around the corner from Monterey Square, and laid it on a work table in a climate-controlled room.

Shortly after 7:00 p.m. the same day, Dr. Burns, the leading bone expert on Dr. Metts' team, began to sweep away the rust on the cover of the box. Soon after, she almost dropped the paint brush in her hands. She saw the name "Brigadier General Cassimer Pulaski," in very fine etching, on a silver plate attached to the cover. "It's spelled here C-a-s-s-i-m-e-r," she said to others gathered around the table. All the time photographers were snapping pictures of the goings on.

The loosest sides of the crumbly box were taken out of the way first. This revealed a complete skull, two molars, and other brown fragile bones which indicated that they were of a young white male who did a lot of horseback riding in his life. "Oh boy," Gardner exclaimed. "We got bones!" Dr. Metts, who was appointed by Gardener to head the Pulaski exhumation team earlier this year, summed up the skeleton in one word: "beautiful."

VINDICATION. The finding of Pulaski's remains bore out the accounts of Captain Samuel Bulfinch, who said unequivocally that Pulaski was not buried at sea but in the ground in the area where his three-masted ship, Wasp, was tied up on October 15, 1779. It is further reported that Major William P. Bowen then dug up Pulaski's remains on Greenwich Plantation--where his grandmother buried them by torchlight in order to fool graverobbers--and moved them to Monterey Square in Savannah. Dr. Burns found dried skin still on the bones that proved the body was buried when the earth was beginning to cool, as it does in the Georgia lowlands in October, and other signs that the remains were those of Pulaski.

Yet, in the first newspaper coverage of the historic discovery, reporters did not put old, absurd controversies behind them. From the headline in the Savannah News-Press, "Are they Pulaski's Bones?" to the question mark at the head of Bill Hendrick's story in the Atlanta Constitution Journal, and the seven-paragraph release by the Associated Press, all frothed question marks through their newspaper stories, and much less cared that Bulfinch and Bowen had anything to do with Pulaski's body. Not once were their names mentioned.

Pinkowski, whose letter earlier in the year to city officials in Savannah led to the creation of a committee to exhume Pulaski's remains in the base of the monument, wistfully recalled the words in 1913 of Lucien Lamar Knight, who earned a Master's degree in history from Princeton University

and was then the official historian of Georgia: "There is no truth to the tradition that he was buried at sea."

BONES TO PICK. On a positive note, Dr. Burns, who studied at the University of Florida under Professor William Maples, who dealt with the nine skeletons of the Romanovs exhumed from a shallow grave in Siberia in 1991, believed that by a human bone analysis, she could tell the age at death, sex, height, race, cause of death, and some of the habits of the skeleton in life. It will take her a about a year to present a final report to Gardner and Metts.

Her experience in the bone world made her appealing to Dr. Metts, coroner of Chatham County, who was assigned to form a committee of scientists to study the remains under the Pulaski monument.

For most of her consulting work, she receives a high fee, but she has offered to do the work for the Pulaski exhumation team for nothing.

What makes her curious about Pulaski's death?

She loves Savannah, and the death of a Polish count is part of the city's history.

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